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Item 4 (j) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: coordination of statistical programmes

Work of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2016/220 and past practices. It provides an overview of the work carried out by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities in 2016 and summarizes the main conclusions of the Committee at its twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth sessions, held in New York on 7 March 2016 and in Paris on 29 and 30 September 2016, respectively. The Statistical Commission may wish to take into account the views of the Committee in its discussions under the relevant agenda items, and is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2017/1.

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I. Introduction

1. The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities held two sessions in 2016. The twenty-seventh session of the Committee was held in New York on 7 March 2016 prior to the forty-seventh session of the Statistical Commission, and the twenty-eighth session of the Committee, hosted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), was held in Paris on 29 and 30 September 2016. Both meetings were chaired by the two Co-Chairs of the Committee: Martine Durand, Chief Statistician and Director, OECD Statistics Directorate, and Pietro Gennari, Chief Statistician and Director, Statistics Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The present report provides an overview of the work carried out in 2016 and summarizes the main conclusions of the Committee at its twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth sessions.

II. Membership

2. The Committee currently has 45 members,[1] 40 of whom attended at least one session in 2016.

3. Given its increasing size and in order to maintain its effective functioning, the Committee is currently considering the possibility of revising its terms of reference concerning the criteria for membership, the establishment of a bureau that would support the Co-Chairs in organizing the work of the Committee between sessions, and its working modalities, in order to accommodate this increased membership.

III. Working methods

4. In addition to holding two annual sessions, the Committee operates actively between sessions through a network of task teams, following up on the decisions taken during the regular sessions. The teams choose their own working arrangements and hold their own meetings, if appropriate. They prepare documents on progress made and the results of their work and report to the Committee for decision-making at its regular sessions. As the secretariat of the Committee, the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat works closely with the Co-Chairs, facilitates communication among Committee members and prepares the reports of the regular sessions and the annual report to the Statistical Commission; it also maintains the web page of the Committee on the Division website.[2]

5. Since the forty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission, the Committee has developed joint statements on items in the agenda of the Commission that are important to the Committee. Such statements must receive strong support from Committee members in order to serve as a mandate for the Co-Chairs to speak on behalf of the Committee. The Co-Chairs delivered three joint statements at the

[1] See http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/members.htm.

[2] http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/workpartner_ccsa.htm.

forty-seventh session, in 2016.[1] The Committee is also planning to deliver joint statements at the forty-eighth session.

6. The Committee is developing a multi-year work programme and has conducted a survey on priority topics to be included in it. The Committee is committed to translating work areas and discussions into specific outputs (publications, papers and websites) in order to increase the impact and visibility of its work.

IV. Work of the Committee in 2016

A. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

7. Issues surrounding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development have been on the Committee's agenda at every session since its twentieth session, held in Frankfurt, Germany, during the fourth quarter of 2012.

8. The Committee receives regular briefings on the development of an indicator framework for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in view of the critical supporting role of international organizations in monitoring the implementation of the Agenda. The Committee established a task team, in collaboration with the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System, which will work on suggested guidelines and principles for the reporting and sharing of data on the Sustainable Development Goals.

9. The Committee also continued to stay informed about the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations World Data Forum, the Global Action Plan and the work being undertaken on the transformative agenda. Ten Committee members contributed to the global consultation for the Global Action Plan, which was conducted in November 2016.

B. Cost-benefit structures and communicating the value of international statistics

10. The Committee held a special session on the theme "Cost-benefit structures and the value of international statistics" at its twenty-eighth session, demonstrating not only considerable interest in the topic, but also that comparisons of costs and benefits were especially difficult to establish and could be politically sensitive. The Committee will integrate this topic into its multi-year programme and consider it again at a later session.

11. The Committee welcomed the initiative of the Statistics Division to provide an opportunity to discuss the contribution and respective roles of national and

[1] In 2016, joint statements were delivered under the following agenda items: 3 (a), "Data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (2 statements) and 3 (d), "Big data for official statistics".

international statistics to the global statistical system, from a statistical policy perspective, at the High-level Forum on Official Statistics held on 7 March 2016.

12. The Committee also decided to organize a session on that topic during the sixty-first World Statistics Congress, to be held in Marrakech, Morocco, from 16 to 21 July 2017.

C. Principles governing international statistical activities

13. The Committee endorsed the principles governing international statistical activities at its sixth session, held in September 2005, and reaffirmed them in a revised preamble at its twenty-third session, held on 3 March 2014.

14. The principles, which are inspired by the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, are accompanied by a list of good practices set out under each principle. These good practices are intended to aid organizations in the implementation of the principles. Over the course of 2015 and early 2016, a task team worked on creating a more comprehensive list of good practices that would enable members to better implement the principles. The work of the team was based largely on the results of a web-based survey conducted in May and June 2014 on the implementation of the principles (see E/CN.3/2015/29). The Committee adopted the new version of the good practices[4] at its twenty-seventh session, held on 7 March 2016.

D. Capacity-building and training centres

15. The Committee presents on its website materials and tools for strengthening training and human resources development among national and international statistical agencies. Information presented there is based on early initiatives aimed at the creation of a Committee training network.[5] The Committee also supports the establishment of a global network of regional training centres (see E/CN.3/2017/30).

E. Publications by the Committee

16. In 2016, the Committee published on its website the special issue paper entitled "Case studies: using non-official sources in international statistics",[6] which complements a paper entitled "Recommended practices on the use of non-official sources in international statistics",[7] published by the Committee in 2013. Other publications, as well as the Global Inventory of Statistical Standards, are available from the Committee's website hosted by the Statistics Division.[8]

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[4] See http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/principles_stat_activities.htm.

[5] See http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/ccsa_training/ccsa_training_resources.htm.

[6] Available from http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub/2016docs-28th/E-publication.pdf.

[7] Available from http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/practices.pdf.

[8] http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/workpartner_ccsa.htm.

F. Committee presence at international conferences

17. The special session, convened on 3 June 2016 on the theme "Quality of international statistics: statistics tailored to the international Sustainable Development Goals agenda: the challenges for international statistics at global, national and local levels", received positive feedback. All conference papers and presentations prepared for the event are available from the website of the Committee.[9]

18. The Committee decided to organize another session during the sixty-first World Statistics Congress (see para. 12 above).

G. 2017 sessions

19. The Committee agreed that its twenty-ninth session would be held in New York, on the morning of 6 March 2017, in conjunction with the forty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission. The thirtieth session will be held during the fourth quarter of 2017.

[9] http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub/2016docs-CDQIO/Programme.htm.